Unit Response to Program Review Committee Report
Women’s Studies Program

We wish to thank the Program Review Committee for their insightful examination of the Women’s Studies Program. We appreciate the time and effort that went into their analysis. Their constructive recommendations will lead to positive changes to our program and, in fact, already have spurred action. Generally, we agree with their suggestions and offer our response to each suggestion below.

1. **We endorse the recommendation of the external evaluators that Women’s Studies expand and accelerate recruitment efforts to attract more majors, minors, and program certificate students. We recommend that Women’s Studies seek to double the number of majors, minors, and program certificate students by the next program review cycle.**

   We agree that WS should increase the number of students in our programs. We believe that implementation of several of the other suggestions contained within the PRC report will assist in this endeavor. For example, as we increase the number of courses using the WS prefix (including cross-listed courses), our program will be more visible and attractive to students. We also will look into developing a promotional dvd on women’s studies that can be used when visiting high schools, during preview days, etc. Additionally, we plan to employ the following:
   - Use our website to highlight our minor program explicitly showing how it nicely complements most other majors at the University.
   - We already have plans to develop a minor in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies, which likely will attract new students.
   - Continue to improve the visibility of the Program through, for example, more outreach to area high schools, sponsorship of WBGU radio and WBGU-PBS programs, and through our annual WS Research Symposium.

   Likely, it will take a couple years before we see an effect on our number of students. However, as suggested in the program review report, we will aim to double the number of undergraduate students in WS by our next program review.

2. **As part of the assessment plan, we endorse the external evaluators’ recommendation that faculty in Women’s Studies specify methods of student self-assessment. Further, we recommend that the Director in coordination with her affiliated faculty develop a systematic approach for the creation, collection, and display of materials from classes and internships through which students demonstrate program learning outcomes.**

   While we believe that we have an adequate assessment plan for the senior WS students’ portfolios, we agree that improvements to the portfolio process are needed. Students need better guidelines so that they include information that will show their progress on all WS learning outcomes. To this end, we plan to:
   - develop more specific instructions for students about what to include in their portfolios,
   - encourage WS instructors to have students complete assignments that will reflect progress towards WS learning outcomes, and
   - have students begin developing their portfolios earlier in their academic career (e.g., in our curricular revisions, the “History” course will now have a 200-level number encouraging students to take this class in their sophomore year; the instructor of this class will integrate initial portfolio development into the class assignments).

   We also plan to investigate the use of electronic portfolios and modify our current assessment form so that students can use it as a self-assessment of their progress towards our learning outcomes, which will then be included in their portfolio.
2b. In particular, we recommend that an assessment plan be developed for WS 200 given its importance to the recruitment of majors.

This course provides numerous challenges to us given the large number of sections and instructors. We agree that we need to improve our assessment of the instruction in this course to monitor that students receive positive learning experiences across sections. We discussed a number of possible plans, such as:
- having a review process for syllabi developed by all first time instructors and graduate assistants,
- adding new items to our current course evaluation to more directly assess progress toward the WS learning outcomes, and
- conducting a workshop for all graduate assistants and new instructors prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

We will continue to discuss these options and develop a specific plan of action during the next school year.

3. Based on recommendations by the external evaluators and learning outcomes articulated in Appendix N, we recommend the inclusion of an international/global course on women from non-western nations or regions for Women's Studies majors and the expansion of WS 302 into a 2-course sequence over two semesters, with the first semester focusing on the History of Feminist Thought and the second semester focusing on Contemporary Feminist Theory and Practice.

We fully agree with this suggestion and are in the process of completing the curricular forms to make the following changes:
- WS 302 History of Feminist Thought and Action will become WS 273, which will encourage students to take it during their sophomore year.
- We are developing WS 313 Contemporary Feminisms & Global Perspectives. WS 273 will be the prerequisite to WS 313.

Although we would like to create a separate course on international/global feminism, we do not feel that this is realistic at this time given faculty loads and our number of students. Further, several WS courses that are being “bluesheeted” have a strong international focus (e.g., Women and Interpersonal Violence, Ecofeminism, Women in Contemporary Africa).

4. We recommend that paperwork be completed so that WS 300 and 400 topics courses can be assigned regular course numbers and appropriately cross-listed as needed.

We have made completing the curricular forms for topics courses and cross-listed courses a priority this summer and fall. So far, we have completed the forms so that the following courses will have a WS prefix: Psychology of Gender, Sociology of Gender, Sport and Gender, and Women of Color in the US.

We also are in the process of completing the curricular forms so that the following courses will become permanent, formal courses in WS: Ecofeminism, Women & Interpersonal Violence, Women’s Sexualities, Theories of Othered Bodies, Reproductive Health & Politics, and Women in Contemporary Africa. Each of these courses has been taught several times as a “topics” course. Our goal is to have all these curricular forms submitted in the Fall, 2006.

We further recommend that communication across units and colleges regarding anticipated plans for course offerings on women and gender topics be improved so that courses appropriate for Women's Studies students are offered across semesters and at times not in conflict.
Meetings have taken place with Gary Lee (Sociology) and Katerina Ray, (Art) regarding cross-listing courses. Once courses are cross-listed, we will collaborate when developing course schedules to spread gender-oriented courses across semesters and to avoid time conflicts. The Director will continue to have meetings with Chairs/Directors of other academic programs who offer or could offer cross-listed classes.

5. **We recommend that Women’s Studies recruit particular faculty members in areas that can broaden and deepen the impact of Women’s Studies at the University and that a mechanism be developed that enables the Director to recruit these faculty. These faculty could hold joint appointments in Women’s Studies and their home departments, or they could be recruited for particular courses. In addition, we endorse the external evaluators’ recommendation that, when resources permit and coordination of hiring can be arranged, the University hire at least one additional tenure-track faculty member in a national search to teach lower- and upper-level WS courses and that this external hire be a joint appointment with another unit, preferably one under-represented in the current mix of faculty.**

While we concur with the intent of this recommendation, we are not sure how much of it is within our control. Rather, we view achieving this as a collaborative effort with the Dean. We did identify some strategies that may allow WS to become more involved in recruitment and hiring of faculty in other programs:

- The Director of WS can write a letter to the Chairs/Directors of other programs describing how we would like to collaborate with them and how we may be able to work together to cover the needs of both programs. This letter could be endorsed by the Dean.
- WS Steering committee members or affiliated faculty could become part of search committees in other academic programs. In fact, we would welcome the opportunity to assist programs in this manner. The Dean could make this suggestion to Chairs and Directors as they prepare for new faculty searches.

WS also believes that we could do a better job of outreaching to faculty who may be interested in getting more involved with our program. Suggestions to do so included: developing a program in the late fall for all faculty who would like offer cross-listed courses or become affiliated faculty members and creating a summer institute for faculty with feminist interests.

6. **We recommend that a teaching load policy be developed for core faculty so that loads are equitable and appropriate, and that the Director, like chairs of departments, be granted the authority to set teaching loads for core faculty and graduate assistants in Women’s Studies.**

This recommendation seemed to be primarily aimed at reducing the teaching load of the undergraduate coordinator, which we already have achieved.

7. **We recommend that Women’s Studies explore ways to increase its self-sufficiency within the University through creation of scholarship of engagement opportunities that might yield affiliation agreements or partnerships with potential donors, and expansion of alumni networks to find program graduates who may be willing to fund particular projects. We recommend that the Director actively recruit core and affiliated faculty on the basis of their research agendas and grant activity, especially from colleges or units under-represented in the current list of affiliated faculty.**

While this recommendation was discussed, we believe it will take more time to develop an effective plan to accomplish it. During the next seven years, we will develop a plan to outreach to alums, continue/further community partnerships, and recruit affiliated faculty involved in engagement research.
8. We endorse the recommendation of the external evaluators that a communication plan be developed with graduates of the Women’s Studies major, minor, and certificate programs and that the plan be implemented to ensure that program graduates and friends of Women’s Studies are well informed about program achievements and initiatives in order to expand the interest of Women’s Studies’ supporters and donors. We recommend the Director work with the Dean of Arts & Sciences and the Office of Development in identifying graduates of the program, including those who have excelled in careers that might be considered counter-intuitive such as law and corporate business, who might serve as role models for potential majors.

We agree that we should be far more active in communicating with our alumnae/i. As a first step, we are adding an alumnae/i page to our website (which is being redesigned this summer). We also plan to explore the development of a WS newsletter that would be disseminated to alumnae/i, community “friends of WS” and others involved in our program. During the next seven years, we plan to develop an effective line of communication and outreach with our alumnae/i.

9. We endorse the external reviewers’ recommendation that the Women’s Studies Program design program communications to highlight specific initiatives and ways in which these initiatives contribute to the scholarship of engagement. We recommend that Women’s Studies faculty document the full range of their students’ and their own scholarship of engagement activities and that they reference the characteristics established by the Standards Committee for evaluation of Scholarship of Engagement as endorsed by the President (see http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/president/page13269.html).

We believe that the WS faculty are actively involved in the scholarship of engagement. In the course of the next few years, we will develop a plan and work toward making this research more visible campus-wide.

10. We recommend that the Director and faculty members in Women’s Studies develop a strategic plan for recruitment of more majors, recruitment of faculty willing to teach in Women’s Studies, for assessment of WS 200 given its importance in recruitment of majors, and for expanding the network of graduates and friends of Women’s Studies.

This recommendation seems to summarize several of the previous suggestions and our previous responses have addressed them.